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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

31 March 1953

SUBJECT: SE-41: PROBABLE COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO CERTAIN
POSSIBLE UN/US MILITARY COURSES OF
ACTION WITH RESPECT TO THE KOREAN
WAR

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the probable military and political reactions
Communist China and the USSR to the following possible UN/US
military courses of action with respect to the Korean war:

Course A -- The UN/US to continue for the foreseeable
future military pressure on the enemy at substantially
the present level, while building up ROK forces, with a
view to possible limited redeployment of US forces from
Korea.

Course B -- The UN/US to maintain current restrictions
on military operations but increase military pressure on
the enemy by stepping up ground operations while continuing
aggressive air and naval action, with a view to making hos-
tilities more costly to the enemy, in the hope that he might
agree to an armistice acceptable to the US.

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Course C -- The UN/US to maintain current restrictions on military operations but continue aggressive air and naval action in Korea while launching a series of coordinated ground operations along the present line followed by a major offensive to establish a line at the waist of Korea, with a view to causing maximum destruction of enemy forces and materiel and achieving a favorable settlement of the Korean war.

Course D -- The UN/US to extend and intensify military pressures on the enemy by stages, including air attack and naval blockade directly against Manchuria and Communist China, and, if required, increased ground operations in Korea, with a view to making hostilities so costly to the enemy that a favorable settlement of the Korean war might be achieved.

Course E -- The UN/US to undertake a coordinated offensive to the waist of Korea, and a naval blockade and air and naval attacks directly against Manchuria and Communist China, with a view to inflicting maximum possible destruction of enemy forces and materiel in Korea consistent with establishing a line at the waist and achieving a favorable settlement of the Korean war.

Course F -- The UN/US to undertake a coordinated, large-scale offensive in Korea and a naval blockade and air and naval attacks directly against Manchuria and Communist China, with a view to the defeat and destruction of the bulk of the Communist forces in Korea and settlement of the Korean war on the basis of a unified, non-Communist Korea.

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For the purposes of this estimate, it is assumed that the unwillingness to make the concessions necessary to achieve an armistice which has characterized Communist behavior in Korea over the past months will continue until some major change occurs in UN/US policy. The estimate does not take into consideration recent Soviet gestures or Chou En-lai's overture of 30 March for settlement of the POW issue. There is not sufficient evidence to enable us to estimate whether these gesture or this overture in fact represent significant Communist concessions. We believe, however, that they do not result either from fear of military defeat in Korea or from willingness of the new Soviet rulers to end the East-West struggle.

(In printed text succeeding paragraphs will be renumbered beginning with 1.)

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DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION: RELATION OF KOREA TO OVER-ALL SOVIET AND CHINESE
COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES

5. In order to achieve their over-all objective of weakening and destroying the Western Powers, as well as to consolidate, strengthen, and protect the bases of their power, the USSR and Communist China are united in their intention to expel the West from Asia and particularly from Korea. In Korea, they have appeared for the past year to be reconciled to the existing military stalemate in Korea, possibly estimating that the US/UN would eventually weary of the strain and that a solution could then be obtained leading ultimately to Communist control of all Korea.

6. The Communists probably estimate that the Korean war exerts a divisive influence on the Western Powers and that at least during 1953 the UN/US is unlikely to commit the military strength in the Far East necessary to drive the Communists from Korea. At

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the same time, the Communists probably believe that the UN/US will take actions during 1953 which will increase the costs and risks of the Korean war for the Communists. 1/ 2/

7. We believe that the Communist objective to gain control of all Korea will remain unchanged. We also believe, however, that the Communists desire to avoid general war over the Korean issue and that Communist courses of action in Korea will be determined by Communist global interests. 3/

/ This paragraph is identical with paragraph 6, NIE-80, "Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action in Korea through 1953."

/ The representatives of the Department of State dissents from this paragraph on grounds that it does not take into account the possibility that the Communists may view continuation of the Korean war as carrying with it disadvantages that outweigh the advantages deriving from its divisive influence. In particular, it fails to take into account the possibility that the Communists view the Korean war as an undue stimulant to the Western mobilization effort, and/or as requiring an expenditure of effort out of proportion to actual or potential gains.

/ The Director of Intelligence, USAF may suggest that this paragraph read as follows:

"We believe that Communist China currently desires to limit the war to the Korean issue and that the USSR desires to avoid any expansion of the war which would seriously risk a general war involving fundamental strengths of the Soviet Union. We believe that the Communists would conclude an armistice in Korea if the alternative were clearly that of such a general war. However, an expansion of the Korean war by the UN probably would not at the outset clearly present such an alternative and might in the end produce a ~~Appropriate For Release 2009/04/18 : CIA-RDP79S01011A001000030014-1~~ ^{increasing} involvement in which either the UN or the Soviet Union would be forced to resort to general war."

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8. Communist reactions, political and military, to UN/US military initiatives in Korea will be conditioned by the following interests:

- a. Retention of substantially all Korean territory north of the 38th Parallel.
- b. Survival of a Communist regime in a substantial portion of North Korea.
- c. Maintenance of Communist military and political prestige.
- d. Security of Chinese Communist armed forces in the Korean theater.
- e. Security of the Manchurian industrial complex.
- f. Security of the Manchurian and Soviet borders.

9. If prior to the onset of any UN/US military course of action, the Communists recognized that they were faced with a clear choice between making the concessions necessary to reach an armistice, or accepting the risk that UN/US military operations would endanger the security of the Manchurian and Soviet borders,

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UNIST REACTIONS TO UN/US COURSES OF ACTION INVOLVE EXPANSION OF THE WAR BEYOND KOREA

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destroy the Manchurian industrial complex, or destroy the Chinese Communist armed forces, the Communists would probably agree to an armistice. However, it would be extremely difficult to present them with a clear choice of alternatives before such action was begun. Moreover, once such UN/US action was begun, Communist honor and prestige would become further involved, thereby greatly increasing the difficulties of making the choice between agreeing to an armistice or continuing the war.

PROBABLE COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO UN/US COURSES OF ACTION
WHICH DO NOT INVOLVE EXPANSION OF THE WAR BEYOND KOREA

Course A -- The UN/US to continue for the foreseeable future military pressure on the enemy at substantially the present level, while building up ROK forces, with a view to possible limited redeployment of US forces from Korea.

10. Communist China and the USSR would probably not be inclined initially to interpret the intent of the UN/US build-up for a course of action. The Communists might consider that the war was either gradually building up for greatly intensified hostilities, or merely building up ROK strength so that the US would disengage its forces from Korea.

11. In any event, the Communists would almost certainly continue to build up their military strength in the Korea-Manchuria

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destroy the Manchurian industrial complex, or destroy the Chinese Communist armed forces, the Communists would probably agree to armistice. However, it would be extremely difficult to present them with a clear choice of alternatives before such action was begun. Moreover, once such UN/US action was begun, Communist war and prestige would become further involved, thereby greatly increasing the difficulties of making the choice between agreeing to armistice or continuing the war.

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area for any eventuality,* and, once it became clear that the US was withdrawing forces, would almost certainly seek to exert additional military pressure in Korea. The Communists would probably estimate that such a UN/US course of action would not threaten any of their principal interests in Korea, and therefore they would almost certainly not feel compelled to make concessions to secure an armistice.

12. Course A would probably have little or no immediate effect upon Sino-Soviet cooperation in Korea.

Course B -- The UN/US to maintain current restrictions on military operations but increase military pressure on the enemy by stepping up ground operations while continuing aggressive air and naval action, with a view to making hostilities more costly to the enemy in the hope that he might agree to an armistice acceptable to the US.

Course C -- The UN/US to maintain current restrictions on military operations but continue aggressive air and naval action in Korea while launching a series of coordinated ground operations along the present line followed by a major offensive to establish a line at the waist of Korea, with a view to causing maximum destruction of enemy forces and material and achieving a favorable settlement of the Korean war.

* See NIE-80, "Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action in Korea through 1963," for a discussion of Communist military capabilities in Korea.

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13. The Communists would probably not be able initially to interpret UN/US intention with regard to these alternative courses of action. They would probably base their estimate on the size and composition of the UN/US build-up for these intensified military operations and on the degree of mobilization within the US. We believe that the Communists would estimate that the UN/US build-up and determination for these proposed alternatives would not be great enough to sustain military operations which would seriously threaten their principal interests in the Korean theater.

14. The initial Communist reaction, once such military operations had begun, would be to counter vigorously. The Chinese Communists would probably make a maximum ground defense effort against these UNC operations, and would probably also launch strong counter-offensives. They would make a maximum air defense effort over Communist-held territory and might launch air strikes against UNC amphibious operations. During the first phases of the action, the Communists would probably not commit the Communist Air Force in China (CAFIC)* to large-scale operations over UN-held territory, and would almost certainly not commit Soviet ground forces in Korea or Soviet

* The term CAFIC is meant to include North Korean air units and Soviet units which are believed to be operating with the Chinese Communists.

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air forces over UN-held territory. We believe that the Communists would accept substantial losses of men and materiel in countering or containing these UNC operations. We are unable to estimate whether such losses however great, would in themselves induce the Communists to seek an armistice.

15. If UN forces launched a general offensive, as contemplated in Course C, the Communists would probably estimate that the UN/US was determined to drive the Communist forces from all Korea. If the Communists estimated that they would be unable to halt the UN advance without expanding the war, they might accept the risks of general war involved by committing their air force unreservedly over UN-held territory or even introducing Soviet ground units to stiffen the Communist defense. Before accepting these risks, however, they would probably attempt to secure an armistice which would leave a substantial part of North Korea in Communists hands.

16. If the Communists accepted heavy losses and continued resistance while retreating northward and if UN/US forces then halted and established a defensive line at the waist, the Communists would probably attempt to reconstitute their forces in order to contain further UN advances and in order to prepare for future attempts to drive UN forces from North Korea. We are unable to estimate

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whether, in these circumstances, the Communists would accept a military and political stalemate along the new line or make the concessions necessary to reach the armistice.

17. Courses B and C would probably not affect Sino-Soviet cooperation in Korea.

II. PROBABLE COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO UN/US COURSES OF ACTION WHICH INVOLVE EXPANSION OF THE KOREAN WAR

Course D -- If the UN/US were to extend and intensify military pressures on the enemy by stages, including air attack and naval blockade directly against Manchuria and Communist China, and, if required, increased ground operations in Korea, with a view to making hostilities so costly to the enemy that a favorable settlement of the Korean war might be achieved.

Course E -- If the UN/US were to undertake a coordinated offensive to the waist of Korea, and a naval blockade and air and naval attacks directly against Manchuria and Communist China, with a view to inflicting maximum possible destruction of enemy forces and materiel in Korea consistent with establishing a line at the waist and achieving a favorable settlement of the Korean war.

Course F -- If the UN/US were to undertake a coordinated, large-scale offensive in Korea and a naval blockade and air and naval attacks directly against Manchuria and Communist China, with a view to the defeat and destruction of the bulk of the Communist forces in Korea and settlement of the Korean war on the basis of a unified, non-Communist Korea.

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18. If, prior to actual initiation of such military operations, the Communists should become convinced that the strength and determination of the UN powers were sufficient to endanger their principal interests in the Korean theater, and that these dangers could not be averted without serious risk of a general war, they would probably make the concessions necessary to reach an armistice.

19. If, as a result of Communist miscalculation of UN/US capabilities and intentions, or because the Communists were not willing to make the compromises necessary to obtain an armistice, the war were expanded to Manchuria and China proper, the Communists would almost certainly assume, particularly if UN ground forces launched large-scale attacks in Korea, that the UN/US was prepared to accept any risk in order to drive the Communists from Korea and to destroy the military and industrial potential of Communist China. The Communists would almost certainly assume that any UNC air attacks against Manchuria or China proper would sooner or later include air attacks against their Chinese Communist industrial complex.

20. We believe that in response to the initiation of any of these courses of action, the Communists would offer maximum resistance, including greatly increased Soviet participation in the air

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defense of Manchuria and China proper and CAFIC attacks on UN forces and bases in the Far East. We believe that so long as they were able to maintain the security of their forces in Korea, inflict serious losses on the UN air forces attacking China and Manchuria, and protect Manchurian industry, the Communists would not be willing to sacrifice any of their important interests in Korea in order to obtain an armistice. * Under these circumstances, their unwillingness to compromise their position in Korea would be strengthened if their political and psychological countermeasures appeared to have the effect of significantly reducing UN and/or US determination to sustain an expanded war in the Far East.

21. If, however, in the implementation of any of the above courses of action, the Communists were unable to counter UN/US air operations against Manchuria and if it appeared to the Communists that the Manchurian industrial complex were threatened with destruction, we believe that the Communists would be willing to sacrifice some of their interests in Korea in order to obtain a cessation of hostilities. If simultaneously with air attacks on Manchuria and

* SE-27, "Probable Effects on the Soviet Bloc of Certain Courses of Action Directed at the Internal and External Commerce of Communist China," dated 9 March 1953, concludes that a large scale and sustained air and naval bombardment of key Chinese Communist transportation lines, in conjunction with a naval blockade, would not in itself induce the Communists to accept a Korean settlement on UN terms.

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China proper, UN/US forces were advancing in North Korea, the Communists, while seeking to negotiate an armistice that secured continued Communist control over a substantial portion of North Korea, might commit Soviet air units over-UN-held territory and might introduce Soviet ground forces into Korea. The USSR would, in any event, leave to the UN/US the responsibility for recognizing the commitment of Soviet forces as a casus belli.

22. Although we believe these UN/US courses of action would impose strains on Sino-Soviet relations, we do not believe that these courses of action would cause the Chinese Communist leadership to alter basically its alignment with the USSR.

III. EMPLOYMENT OF ATOMIC WEAPONS

23. We believe that if atomic weapons were employed by US/UN forces in any of the above alternative courses of action, the Communists would recognize the employment of these weapons as indicative of Western determination to carry the Korean war to a successful conclusion. We are unable to estimate whether this recognition would by itself lead the Communists to make the concessions necessary to reach an armistice. We believe that the Communist reaction would be in large part determined by the extent of damage inflicted.

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IV. NON-PARTICIPATION OF UN POWERS

24. If UN powers refused to participate in these courses of action, the Communists would be encouraged to resist in the hope of further straining US relations with its western allies and in the hope that US determination to sustain the war alone would falter. The Communists would also feel that the risks of general war would be lessened and therefore they would be less restrained in their military reactions against US operations.

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